

## **CDFA Listening Session Remarks – July 1 2008, San Luis Obispo**

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California agriculture, and agriculture on the Central Coast is different. It has always been a capital-intensive but simultaneously very seasonally labor intensive agriculture. California agriculture has both a strong dependence on distant markets and ever- growing demands for locally produced products. Having access to a combined 1 million local customers in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Monterey County is certainly preferable to having only 0.75 million customers in all of North Dakota.

Agriculture in California and on the Central Coast is growing more rapidly than U.S. agriculture, is more flexible in selecting production alternatives, is more responsive to market driven demand signals, and is significantly less vulnerable to federal budget cuts to commodity programs. Every one of these attributes is a plus.

We also have dozens of “commodity cycles” going on simultaneously, with the Central Coast producing more than 100 individual crops. This leads to constant instability, with a commensurate need for science based information that allows rapid adjustments.

The foundation for the development of this mobile and highly productive system has been the development of research information by the campuses and local county-based Cooperative Extension programs of the University of California. These basic inputs of crop production and protection have allowed agricultural producers to develop many production options to meet changing environments, exploit opportunities, and be competitive in both domestic and foreign markets.

A "must have" in an Ag Vision for 2030 is stable and continued funding for basic and applied research and extension of science-based information. With these inputs, University of California can continue to make a real difference in helping California agriculture and related interests (natural resources, health and nutrition, and youth and families).

Whether it be through the development of new local commodities like edamame and blueberries, support of the unique wine grape industry through better understanding of soils and salinity conditions in local vineyards, or promoting the coordinated management of both food safety and environmental quality in many of our local crops, the research-based programs of our local Cooperative Extension offices must continue to develop and extend information that help solve local problems for growers who supply food to our neighbors, to California and to the nation.

Johnston, WE and AF McCalla. 2004. Whither California Agriculture: Up, Down or Out? Some Thoughts about the Future

Giannini Foundation Report <http://giannini.ucop.edu/calag.htm>